

2026 October Water Supply Update

Will there be water available in October?

Many landowners have asked whether water will be available through October this year. The short answer is that, as of mid-August, it remains uncertain.

In 2025, the Washington Department of Ecology ordered curtailment of senior water rights beginning October 6, resulting in the earliest end of irrigation for senior diverters in over 30 years. While water supply conditions entering 2026 are better than last year, continued drought conditions, uncertainty surrounding late-season operations, and current Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) management decisions mean growers should continue planning for the possibility of reduced October deliveries.

Why is October water a concern?

BOR operates the Yakima Project and manages the federal reservoir system. Since 2002, Project operations have been guided by the Interim Comprehensive Operating Plan (IOP), which attempts to integrate the various contracts, agreements, court rulings, and operational requirements governing water management in the Yakima Basin.

SVID is concerned that current IOP drought-year operating targets and reservoir management practices may not reliably preserve enough water to satisfy senior water rights through October. The October 2025 curtailments underscored the need to reassess whether existing operations adequately address late-season demands and protect senior water rights.

What has SVID done?

Since the October 2025 curtailments, SVID has worked with other senior irrigation districts and canal companies to advocate for protection of senior water rights through the full irrigation season.

In May, SVID joined three other senior districts in submitting a formal delivery call to Ecology requesting administration of water rights consistent with the Acquavella Final Decree and the doctrine of prior appropriation. The districts requested that senior water rights be protected throughout their authorized period of use, including October.

Since then, district representatives have continued meetings and correspondence with Ecology and BOR regarding October operations and water supply management. In July, SVID joined eight other senior

districts and canal companies representing more than 180,000 irrigated acres in requesting additional agency action to protect senior water deliveries through October in 2026 and future years.

What have the agencies told us?

Ecology has acknowledged the significant impacts caused by the October 2025 curtailments but stated it is too early to determine whether similar actions will be necessary in 2026. Ecology has not provided assurances that senior water rights will be fully supplied through October.

BOR has maintained that its operations are consistent with the IOP and existing legal obligations. Senior districts continue to express concern that current operating practices may not adequately protect senior water rights through October during drought years.

Is SVID suing the Proratable Districts?

No. SVID has not filed litigation against any proratable irrigation district or water user group.

The districts' efforts have focused on working with Ecology and BOR to ensure water rights are administered and managed consistent with court decrees, settlement agreements, and the doctrine of prior appropriation. No litigation has been filed by SVID regarding October 2026 water supplies.

What Growers Should Do

- Continue planning for the possibility of a shorter irrigation season.
- Monitor SVID updates and notices as conditions develop.
- Contact the District office with specific questions regarding deliveries or water supply conditions.

SVID will continue working with Ecology, BOR, and other senior water users to protect adjudicated water rights and will keep landowners informed as additional information becomes available.